

Message Text

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12

ACTION EB-07

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FM AMEMBASSY JIDDA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0201

INFO AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMCONSUL DHAHRAN

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

USMISSION GENEVA

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SUMMARY: WE HAVE LEARNED THAT A PURELY DOMESTIC SATELLITE HAS NOW BEEN INCLUDED IN THE FORTHCOMING FIVE YEAR PLAN AND THAT INCREASING DISCUSSION OF IT WITHIN THE GOVERNMENT OF SAUDI ARABIA COULD LEAD TO A RELATIVELY EARLY READINESS TO ACCEPT AN AMERICAN APPROACH ON THE SUBJECT. ACTION REQUESTED: CONSIDERATION BE GIVEN TO BRIEFING SAUDIS DURING FEB 26-27 MEETING AND FURNISHING EMBASSY WITH PERTINENT MATERIAL. END SUMMARY.

1. FOLLOWING SEVERAL WEEKS OF PROBINGS, EMBASSY HAS DETERMINED THAT PLANS FOR A DOMESTIC SATELLITE HAVE NOW
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BEEN INCLUDED-AS A RESULT OF OUR WORK-IN THE FORTHCOMING

FIVE YEAR PLAN. DISCUSSIONS HELD WITH A PRIVATE AMERICAN CONSULTANT, AND WITH BOTH SAG GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS AND THE HEAD OF THE UN DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM INDICATE THAT THE TIME IS RIPENING WHEN A FULL-SCALE ATTEMPT CAN BE MADE TO DEFINE WHAT SUCH A SATELLITE MIGHT DO FOR SAUDI ARABIA.

2. DISCUSSIONS WITH DAVID L. CODDINGTON, A WASHINGTON-BASED (POTOMAC, MD.) CONSULTANT WHO NUMBERS AMONG HIS CLIENTS HAJI ALI REZA OF JIDDA AND WHO WAS FORMERLY EMPLOYED BY NORTHROP PAGE AND THE FEDERAL ELECTRIC CORPORATION (SUBSIDIARY OF ITT) INDICATES THAT WITH THE GOVERNMENT OF SAUDI ARABIA THERE IS DEVELOPING A CONSENSUS THAT 1) THE PAN ARAB SATELLITE PROGRAM WILL NOT BE REALIZED VERY SOON AND WHEN IT IS WILL NOT SERVE THE SAME PURPOSE 2) A SAUDI DOMESTIC SATELLITE SHOULD BE BUILT HAVING BOTH MILITARY AND CIVILIAN CAPABILITY FOR THE DISSEMINATION OF EDUCATIONAL TELEVISION THROUGHOUT THE KINGDOM FOR ENTERTAINMENT AND OTHER SOCIAL NEEDS IN REMOTE AREAS INCLUDING HEALTH CARE. CODDINGTON WISHES TO MEET WITH CHARLES WILK (U.S. SAUDI ECONOMIC COMMISSION EXPERT ON COMMUNICATIONS) AND WE CONCUR THAT CODDINGTON'S APPROACH (BASICALLY A HUGHES/ITT ONE) SHOULD BE EXPLORED AS PERHAPS ONE OF THE QUICKEST MEANS OF BRINGING SATELLITE CAPABILITY TO THE KINGDOM.

3. WE HAVE DETERMINED SEPARATELY THAT HUSSEIN MANSOUR, THE CENTRAL PLANNING EXPERT ON COMMUNICATIONS, IS PREPARED TO DISCUSS SATELLITE COMMUNICATIONS FOR THE KINGDOM WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF THE FIVE YEA PLAN. HOWEVER, MANSOUR SUGGESTED A SLIGHT DELAY IN THE PRESENTATION HERE. WE DO NOT YET HAVE CROSS-TALK BETWEEN MANSOUR AND THE OTHER KEY COMMUNICATIONS DECISION MAKER, DEPUTY MINISTER OMAR FAQIEH ON THIS SUBJECT. FAQIEH IS PREPARED TO MEET AND BE BRIEFED PRIVATELY BY HUGHES/ITT OR BY USG EXPERTS IF AVAILABLE.

4. UN CHIEF ABUL LATIF SUCCAR HAS JUST REQUESTED A FULL BRIEFING BY THE EMBASSY ON THE SUBJECT. WE HAVE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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FEW MATERIALS SUITABLE HERE AND SUGGEST THAT ANY MATERIALS ON THE CANADIAN EXPERIENCE BE SENT TOGETHER WITH SOFT-WARE EXPERIENCE IN USE OF TELEVISION FOR EDUCATIONAL PURPOSES IN REMOTE AREAS. SUCCAR CLAIMS SUBJECT IS VERY HOT WITHIN GOVERNMENT AT THE MOMENT.

5. THE IDEAL TIME FOR BRINGING THIS MATTER TO A HEAD WITHIN THE GOVERNMENT WOULD BE DURING THE ECONOMIC COMMISSION

MEETINGS IN WASHINGTON. A FIFTEEN-MINUTE BRIEFING SHOULD BE GIVEN BY USG EXPERTS TAILORED TO SAUDI CONDITIONS (SERVING REMOTE AREAS, TURN-KEY PLUS SOFTWARE CAPABILITY OF U.S. COMPANIES, MILITARY CAPABILITY, MEDIUM OF INFORMATION FOR CENTRAL GOVERNMENT, WOMEN'S EDUCATION, HEALTH CARE PARTICULARLY PUBLIC HEALTH, AND ANY OTHER FACTORS THAT SOFTWARE EXPERTS CAN DEVELOP). THE FOLLOW-ON COMMERCIAL EFFORT WITHIN THE GOVERNMENT WOULD FIND THE SAG SUSCEPTIBLE TO VERY EARLY DECISIONS ON THIS IN OUR OPINION, PROVIDING IT DID NOT CONFLICT WITH DECISIONS THAT STILL HAVE TO BE MADE ON CONTRACTING FOR THE LATER STAGES OF THE BACKBONE PROJECT. WILK CAN BE HELPFUL ON THIS POINT.

6. REQUEST WE BE KEPT INFORMED.
AKINS

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